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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-12 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05
FBOE-00 A-01 EA-10 ARA-10 MCT-01 SY-05 COME-00
HA-05 /139 W
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R 151208Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4155
INFO AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 04130

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, YS, UK
SUBJECT: FCO BRIEFING ON SITUATION IN SOUTH YEMEN

SUMMARY: A BRIEFING BY AN FCO OFFICER ON HIS RECENT TRIP TO SOUTH YEMEN REVEALED LITTLE NEW. THE BRITISH HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE OBTAINED FORMAL BASE RIGHTS, OR THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE TAKEN A DEFINITIVE POSITION ON ECONOMIC AID. END SUMMARY

1. FCO DESK OFFICER FOR THE YEMENS, DAVID BEAUMONT, WHO HAS JUST RETURNED FROM A VISIT TO SOUTH YEMEN, BRIEFED EMBOFF MARCH 14 ON HIS VISIT, AS FOLLOWS:

2. SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE. BEAUMONT COMMENTED THAT
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WHILE SOVIET NAVAL SHIPS AND MILITARY AIRCRAFT WERE EASILY VISIBLE FROM A DISTANCE, AND THERE WAS OBVIOUSLY A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF ACTIVITY ON THEIR PART, HE DID NOT OBSERVE THEM LOADING OR UNLOADING AND ASSUMED THIS IS ALL DONE UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS. THE BRITISH EMBASSY THERE HAS NO EVIDENCE YET THAT THE RUSSIANS HAVE OBTAINED A BASE AGREEMENT, BUT THE BRITISH CHARGE

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ASSUMES THAT IN RETURN FOR SOVIET FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE THE SOUTH YEMENI GOVERNMENT MUST HAVE GIVEN THE SOVIETS SOMETHING ALONG THIS LINE IN RETURN.

3. SAUDI AID. THE BRITISH STILL UNDERSTAND THAT WHILE THE SAUDIS HAVE NOT RESUMED THE BUDGETARY SUBSIDY TO THE PDRY GOVERNMENT, THE SAUDIS HAVE RESUMED FOOD AID. BEAUMONT STATED, IN RESPONSE TO EMBOFF'S QUESTION, THAT HE HAD SEEN NO FOOD QUEUES OR OTHER INDICATIONS OF HUNGER OR A SHORTAGE OF FOOD.

4. TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS. BEAUMONT AND A BRITISH EMBASSY OFFICER WERE GIVEN PERMISSION TO DRIVE TO MUKALLA AND THENCE INLAND TO LOOK AT THE HARD-SURFACED ROAD IN FROM MUKALLA WHICH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IS FINANCING.

5. COMMUNICATIONS. THE BRITISH FIRM OF CABLE AND WIRELESS HAS FINALLY LOST OUT TO THE SOVIETS. CABLE AND WIRELESS HAD SOUGHT TO RENEGOTIATE FOR AN EARTH SATELLITE, BUT FAILED AND THE SOVIETS ARE TO TAKE OVER.

6. US EMBASSY BUILDING. THE BRITISH CHARGE RECOMMENDED THAT THE US ATTEMPT TO RETAIN THE PRESENT BUILDING BECAUSE OF THE VALUABLE AND CONVENIENT LOCATION. HOWEVER, THE BUILDING ITSELF IS DETERIORATING DUE TO NEGLECT AND THE ATTACKS OF WHITE ANTS. IT HAS BECOME
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STRUCTURALLY SO WEAK THAT BRITISH PERSONNEL NO LONGER ENTER THE BUILDING.

7. BRITISH-PDRY RELATIONS. BEAUMONT WAS RECEIVED BY SHADLI, WHO AT THE AGE OF 27 IS THE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. SHADLI, WHO SAYS THAT HE IS NOT A PARTY MEMBER, IS THE OSTENSIBLY REASONABLE PROJECTION OF THE FOREIQN MINISTRY. SHADLI ASKED WHEN THE BRITISH WERE GOING TO SEND THE LONG-DELAYED MINISTERIAL-LEVEL MISSION TO VISIT ADEN, TO WHICH BEAUMONT REPLIED THAT BRITISH-PDRY RELATIONS ARE NOT GOOD ENOUGH AT PRESENT TO JUSTIFY SENDING SUCH A MISSION. SHADLI VOLUNTEERED THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WAS IN FOR A MAJOR SHAKE-UP TO INCLUDE THE REMOVAL OF THE "PERMANENT SECRETARY."

8. BRITISH REPRESENTATION. CHARGE ROBERTS IS LEAVING ADEN MARCH 28. HE WILL BE SUCCEEDED BY MALCOLM MCKERNAN, COMING FROM ACCRA.

9. ALI-ISMAIL RIVALRY. ALI CONTINUES TO LOSE GROUND. WHEN EMBOFF ASKED IF HE THOUGHT THAT THERE WERE

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GENUINE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO OR THAT THE RIVALRY
WAS A CHARADE FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUTSIDERS, BEAUMONT
THOUGHT THERE WAS A BIT OF BOTH. THEY HAD SEEN THE
VALUE OF EXPLOITING THEIR DIFFERENCES, BUT BOTH ARE

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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 04130

ENGAGED IN SWINGING PDRY FIRMLY INTO THE ARMS OF THE
SOVIET UNION. (COMMENT: BEAUMONT'S ANSWER APPEARS
TO BE CONSISTENT WITH THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE
ANALYSIS OF THIS ISSUE CONTAINED IN SANA 182. END
COMMENT)

10. THE BRIEFING PROVIDED BEAUMONT WITH AN OPPORTUNITY
TO SHOW EMBOFF ROBERTS' ANNUAL REPORT ON PDRY, DATED
JANUARY 18 (COPY POUCHED TO BRITISH EMBASSY IN WASHING-
TON). AMONG KEY POINTS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO THE
USG WERE THE FOLLOWING:

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11. CUBANS. IN PDRY, "THE USSR IS FORTUNATE IN
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HAVING CUBA AS AN ALLY. WHERE RUSSIAN ARROGANCE AND LACK OF TACT DOES NOT APPEAL TO YEMENIS, THE CUBAN PERSONALITY AND APPROACH DOES."

12. SOVIET INFLUENCE. IT HAS NOT YET REACHED THE EXTENT "WHERE IT COULD BE SAID THAT PDRY WAS UNABLE TO FORMULATE HER OWN POLICIES."

13. CHINESE. "PDRY KEEPS RELATIONS WITH THE CHINESE, NORTH KOREANS, AND VIETNAMESE IN GOOD REPAIR, BUT WE SAW OR HEARD LITTLE OF THEM."

14. TERRORISM. "DESPITE REPEATED DENIALS, PDRY REMAINS A REFUGE AND A TRAINING GROUND FOR TERRORISTS, PRINCIPALLY PALESTINIANS, BUT NO DOUBT OTHER NATIONALITIES FIND THEIR WAY INTO THE CAMPS AS WELL PROVIDED NO PUBLICITY IS FORTHCOMING. IN SUCH AFFAIRS, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT PDRY IS ENCOURAGED BY SOME IF NOT ALL THE FOLLOWING: IRAQ, LIBYA, POSSIBY ALGERIA, GDR, CUBA, AND THE SOVIET UNION. SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES ARE ACTIVE IN THE PLANNING STAGES OR UNDER WAY IN YAR, KUWAIT, ABU DHABI, AND OMAN."

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TAGS: PEPR, YS, UK, SA, UR
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